

both visible and invisible, that will require an untold resource from our Nation.

Through the wonders of modern medicine, servicemembers who would have been lost in previous conflicts are coming home to live productive and fulfilling lives. But they will need a lifetime of care from the VA. That is why part of this bill includes significant investments for research in a number of areas, including traumatic brain injury, spinal cord injury, polytrauma injuries, and sensory loss.

It includes funding that will go to maintaining world-class prosthetics such as the one that was worn by SGT Leroy Petry, whom I saw at the White House last week shake the hand of a grateful President Obama as he was awarded the Medal of Honor.

It is also funding that comes at a critical time as amputations have sharply increased among soldiers in Afghanistan, many of whom are getting out of protective MRAP and Humvees to engage Afghan citizens and at the same time putting themselves at far greater risk of severe IED injuries. According to a recent Washington Post article, twice as many U.S. soldiers wounded in battle last year required limb amputations than in either of the two previous years.

This funding also comes as mental health concerns continue to rise, and suicides among active-duty troops and veterans from these wars have risen to a level now on par with combat deaths. In April, the VA's suicide hotline took 14,000 suicide calls, more than they had taken in any month in the previous 4 years. This bill makes sure we are putting someone on the other end of that call. This bill funds efforts to give veterans access to mental health professionals, and ensures we are not leaving our veterans to go it alone.

But this will do much more than help our newest generation of veterans. For generations we have faced the problems of homelessness among our Nation's veterans without making any real headway. Recently, through the success of programs such as HUD-VASH and the Grant and Per Diem Program, we are seeing real progress toward putting homeless veterans into safe and secure housing, and the bold goals laid out by the Obama administration to end veterans' homelessness once and for all. This bill includes nearly \$1 billion in direct assistance to homeless veterans, and this bill helps those who have taken on the monumental but deeply personal task of providing care to an injured veteran in their family, those people who have left behind their own careers and personal lives, and even their own health care and benefits to care for those who can't take care of themselves.

It includes major investments to meet the unique needs of one of the fastest growing groups of veterans, women veterans who, through health care and construction upgrades that improve privacy, will benefit from VA

facilities that are more conducive to their needs.

This bill also includes major investments to fund military construction projects worldwide, including readiness centers, barracks, hospitals, clinics, and schools. It also supports family housing construction projects that ensure military families have a satisfactory roof over their heads. And that, by the way, will create thousands of good-paying jobs.

As we all know, the strength of our military is rooted in the strength of the families who support them. Investments such as these are what allow our servicemembers to go abroad knowing that their loved ones are being looked after by the Nation they are protecting.

After nearly a decade at war, the consequences of sending our servicemembers into combat and the sacred obligation we have to care for those injured in service have become clear. But so have the shortcomings and the challenges we have to meet.

Last week, I chaired a hearing on the gaps to mental health care that still exist at the VA, and the stories we heard were deeply frustrating. I heard the stories of two separate veterans who attempted suicide but were still left to wait for weeks, and even months, for appointments at the VA. We have to fix the VA in a way that meets that obligation so they are more flexible and responsive to the needs of today's veterans, and we have to do it in a cost-effective way by making sure we are getting the most value out of every dollar that a bill such as this one provides. Next week in our committee I will be examining the long-term costs of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan to our newest generation of veterans, because I believe we need to address this problem openly and honestly.

Like generations of servicemembers and veterans before them, today's heroes have done everything that has been asked of them. They have been separated from their families through repeat deployments; they have sacrificed life and limb in combat; and they have done all this selflessly and with honor to our country. We cannot allow our commitment to them to lapse or to get caught up in politics. That is why we need to pass this bill.

We must also come to a budget agreement that avoids default and the consequences that would have on our veterans.

We have to keep our promise, no matter what.

Madam President, I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from New York.

ABBY WAMBACH AND THE U.S. WOMEN'S NATIONAL SOCCER TEAM

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, first I want to thank my colleague from the great State of Washington for her remarks and her never-ending

strong and successful defense of our veterans who have done so much for us. I want to salute my colleague from Washington State.

I am going to speak on two topics for the 10 minutes I have allotted. First, on Abby Wambach, the pride of Rochester and the U.S. Women's National Soccer team, and then on the Cut, Cap, and Unbalance Plan that is now being debated in the House and will soon be debated in the Senate.

First, I rise to recognize the extraordinary efforts of the U.S. Women's National Soccer team in this year's World Cup, and in particular Pittsford, NY's own Abby Wambach.

Over the last month, the Women's National Team has taken this country on the ride of a lifetime that we won't soon forget.

From their nail-biting efforts to qualify for the World Cup to their heroic comeback against Brazil in the quarter finals, this team showed the best of America during this year's World Cup. At each stage of this team's success, there was a driving force, a player who learned the game from her older brothers on the soccer fields of New York's greater Rochester region, a player named Abby Wambach. Hundreds of Rochester's fans gathered at her brother's pub to cheer on Abby as she headed ball after ball into the back of the net.

In the past few years, and especially the past month or so, Abby has become a household name. Fans from Rochester, the State of New York, and across the country watched in awe of Abby as she led the U.S. squad throughout the World Cup.

But in Rochester and the surrounding area, Abby has been a star ever since she played on Our Lady of Mercy High School's varsity team as an eighth grader. Unusually young to be playing on a varsity squad, she helped her team achieve a section V title. And as is clear to all of us who have watched Abby over the years, her success has continued ever since.

From Our Lady of Mercy to the Olympic games in Athens, and the 2011 World Cup, Abby has been an incredible player and leader at every turn. Abby Wambach has always represented the best New York has to offer and given young women across the country someone to look up to, and the last month of the World Cup action has only cemented her legacy as one of the greatest U.S. Women's Soccer players of all time.

She scored over 120 international goals, none more dramatic or meaningful than her goal against Brazil in the quarter finals. No matter the odds or the score, Americans will never give up and always believe, and Abby and her teammates showed that same drive and desire during the game against Brazil. Abby and the U.S. soccer team created a moment that will live long in the sports lore of our Nation.

As the buzz continues about her goal, there are some people close to Abby

who probably weren't surprised. For those who watched Abby during her sophomore year score two goals and make a clutch penalty kick that vaulted Our Lady of Mercy to the section V championship match, they know this is what Abby Wambach does.

For months, Abby has been a long way from home. But tomorrow, she will get the warm Rochester welcome she comes to know when her Magic Jack Club faces the Western New York Flash.

Of course, we all know the efforts of the U.S. women's team came just short in the end, and we can't help but be happy for the Japanese team and the entire country as they finally have something to celebrate after the challenging months they have been through. So Japan may have won this round, and congratulations to them, but they should know the U.S. Women's Soccer Team will see them in London for the Olympics next summer, and again for the World Cup in Canada in 2015, with the pride of Rochester, Abby Wambach, leading the way.

CUT, CAP, AND BALANCE

Mr. SCHUMER. Now to perhaps a less happy subject, the so-called Cut, Cap, and Balance Plan.

Let me say we are going to be debating this in the House and in the Senate over the next week. Theater trumps serious solutions as the House Republicans plan a vote on their unrealistic Cut, Cap, and Balance proposal. It truly is theater trumping serious solutions when you put something on the floor that you know may not pass your own body in the House, certainly won't pass the Senate, and would be vetoed by the President, at a time when our Nation's credit is teetering on the edge. Let's stop playing games and solve this problem once and for all.

We on this side of the aisle call the plan Cut, Cap, and Kill Medicare for one good reason. Under this reckless plan, seniors could see their Medicare cuts go up by \$2,500 beyond Ryan cuts, Social Security benefits could be slashed by \$3,000 a year. It is the Ryan plan on steroids.

The Ryan plan has been seriously rejected in a bipartisan vote in this body. The American people dislike it intensely. And yet now we have done something that is even more extreme. If you thought it wasn't possible to be more extreme, look at the Cut, Cap, and Kill Medicare plan that some of our colleagues on the other side of the aisle are offering.

There are three things wrong with their plan. First, we have a serious debt problem. If the credit of the United States goes into default, we will pay the price for a decade. It will make our deficit worse, it will raise costs to the Federal Government because interest rates on Federal bonds will go up and stay up for a very long time. It will raise the cost to average homeowners because both mortgages and credit card

rates will go up. It could very well send our economy back into a recession. Let's roll up our sleeves, let's compromise, and let's meet in the middle and do something that will end our deficit problem, reduce our debt, and make sure we are able to pay the debts we have already incurred.

But, no, theater is the day. Ideologues do not see the world as it is. I read some of the statements by some of the freshman colleagues from the Republican side in the House. They just do not get it. Their view is that they are so right that all they have to do is put this on the floor and all of America and every other Senator and Congressman will go along. Ideologues do not see the world as it is, and that is why I have never been too fond of them, whether they have been on the far right or on the far left. Yet that is who is governing here.

If you read those statements in the papers this morning, that all they have to do is put this out there and everyone will see the righteousness of their cause, I have a word for them: Slashing Medicare and slashing Social Security is not the right thing to do, and I will never see things that way. Saying that millionaires should continue to get tax breaks while we are slashing Social Security and killing Medicare is something I will never go along with, nor will a single colleague on my side of the aisle.

It is not going to pass. It is theater and politics at its worst. It is ideologues governing—or trying to govern. They are not able to govern because they do not see the grays in the world; it is only black or white.

The plan has three strikes against it. No. 1, it will not solve the problem, and it is political theater. No. 2, it will kill Medicare as we know it. That is why we call it cut, cap, and kill Medicare. And, No. 3, it will not do a thing to help the middle class, while giving huge tax breaks to millionaires and corporate America. That is not the plan America wants. That is not the plan America needs. That is not the plan that will pass.

I understand many of us have to bow to an extreme base in the party. That happens around here a lot—but not when we are 2 weeks away from defaulting on our debt, not when we are 2 weeks away from potentially walking off a cliff and incurring injuries from which we will never recuperate.

I call on my colleagues on the other side of the aisle to stop the theater, to stop throwing red meat to the far right base, and join us in solving the problems of America.

I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Nebraska.

Mr. JOHANNIS. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that I be permitted to enter into a colloquy with my Republican colleagues for up to 30 minutes. Senator ALEXANDER of Tennessee, Senator HOEVEN of North Dakota, and Senator RISCH of Idaho will participate with me in this colloquy.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

BALANCED BUDGET AMENDMENT

Mr. JOHANNIS. Madam President, I rise today to speak to an issue that I believe has all the potential in the world to define the future of this great country. It is an issue with which all of us who are participating in this colloquy are very familiar, and that is a balanced budget. All of us are former Governors of the States from which we come.

In my State, the State of Nebraska, our Nebraska Constitution requires a balanced budget. It is not unusual. I believe 49 out of 50 States have this requirement in their constitution. It is not theater; it is the way we do things at the State level.

In addition to that provision, however, our State constitution also says the total amount of money the State of Nebraska can borrow is \$100,000. What does that mean? We must balance the budget on an annual basis, and we cannot go out to the debt market and burden our children and grandchildren by fulfilling promises that, quite honestly, we have no idea how we pay for. We cannot do that.

Does that sound familiar? That is what the Federal Government does every single year, and the Federal Government has been doing it for decades. In Nebraska we are forced to prioritize and live within our means. We have a very simple, straightforward philosophy. We do not promise something we cannot pay for, and we do not buy something we cannot pay for.

Is that unusual? Is that radical? Every working family in America understands that, and they live by that simple concept: the simple concept that they should not buy what they cannot pay for. If they do, it gets them in trouble. Sadly, the Federal Government does not think that applies. It thinks it is kind of a radical notion to apply that to what happens in Washington.

Let's look at the results of this kind of policy in my State of Nebraska. The unemployment rate in Nebraska today is 4.1 percent. During one of the most difficult times since the Great Depression, the unemployment rate in Nebraska never exceeded 5 percent. As I have said before on this floor—let me state that a different way. That means about 96 percent of Nebraskans have work.

Our State believes in the philosophy of less government. I have said many times: Government does not create the jobs, the private sector creates the jobs. It is small businesses and businesses willing to take the risks that will get us out of the tough times we are in now.

When I was Governor, Nebraska went through some very difficult times. I was Governor on 9/11. I was Governor when the dot-com bubble burst. I did